

SOC& 101: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY

Summer 2015 (online)

Bellevue College

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Office Hours: By appointment only.

COURSE INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Welcome to our class, "Introduction to Sociology." I look forward to working with you this quarter and sharing with you my fascination with sociology! Hopefully, you enter this class with some degree of curiosity about why human beings behave the way we do. If so, you should find sociology intellectually rewarding as well as illuminating and useful in your own life.

This course is designed as a broad introduction to the field of Sociology. Over the course of the quarter, we will review several topics frequently studied by sociologists, with a particular focus on inequality and the distribution of power in society. We will discover how social institutions (such as education and the economy) depend upon and perpetuate inequalities between people. You will also learn how to use the "sociological imagination" to see how large institutions affect all of our lives for better or worse. As José Ortega y Gasset said, "Tell me the landscape in which you live, and I will tell you who you are." Indeed, our social environments profoundly influence not only who we think we are, but also how we behave, what we think, and how we see others. The overarching goal of this course is to examine and understand this process.

Sociology is a field that relies on empirical research and evidence, not personal opinion or casual observation. In many cases, the ideas sociology has to offer are difficult to grasp and accept because they challenge many of the taken-for-granted attitudes and opinions that we all tend to operate by in our everyday lives. (Science and research often contradict opinion. As an example, just think about how science challenged the previously held belief that the earth was flat and at the center of the universe!) As we all come to the course with strong ideas and beliefs about the world in which we live, the subject matter is personally as well as intellectually challenging. Some of what you will learn in this course may initially seem like "common sense." Sometimes what you will learn might be shocking, surprising, or even make you angry. Hopefully, you will learn from each experience and take these lessons with you on your future endeavors.

"The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things." –Gilbert Chesterton

LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you will *learn by doing*. You are expected to observe the world, read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a "collaborative learning community" where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you

post a comment or ask a question, you are teaching something to the rest of us. In order to do well in this course, you will need to abandon the traditional "passive" student role and instead *take control of your learning and education*. I think you'll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

A note about online learning: Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending upon your perspective!), online classes are not for everyone. In general, they demand far more independent initiative and personal discipline than do classes that meet on campus. Additionally, online classes demand stronger reading and writing skills. If you are a student who likes having someone to keep you on your toes, such as reminding you regularly to keep up with your work, then online classes are probably not a good choice for you. That's okay (it's not a failure on your part!)...some students simply thrive more when working on a "strict" daily routine, the kind of routine that on-campus classes provide. Thus, the students who succeed most at online learning tend to be those students who:

- are disciplined enough to check the course website around five-to-seven days per week;
- have enough personal initiative that they will contact their instructor (that is, me!) if they don't understand something;
- have good to excellent written communication skills;
- are good readers (i.e. they can sit down and focus on a reading, highlighting key concepts/ideas, and then study it well);
- are independent; AND
- have a basic understanding of computer culture and technology (navigating a website, uploading/downloading, discussion etiquette)

A note about course content: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we sometimes discuss provocative material. Please be advised that, when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Furthermore, I expect you to communicate with others in a professional, academic manner. If you have any questions or concerns about course content, please don't hesitate to let me know.

A note about instructor availability: I have noticed that, sometimes, students who enroll in online classes have unreasonable expectations about their Instructor's availability. Please be aware that I am not online 24-hours a day. In general, I am online for this class a couple of hours per day. You will rarely be able to reach me in the evenings or on the weekends. I am, obviously, an active member of this course, but I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* On Mondays-Fridays, I aim to respond to emails within 24-hours. Please adjust your expectations accordingly. Thanks!

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Describe the "sociological perspective";

- Identify the ways in which culture and social institutions (such as education, the economy, the media, and the family) shape our everyday experiences;
- Explain “social constructionism”;
- Distinguish between factual statements and value judgments;
- Put aside personal ethnocentric attitudes, becoming culturally relative;
- Better understand perspectives different from your own;
- Formulate logical conclusions;
- Apply sociological knowledge to real-life situations;
- Look at your own life sociologically; and
- Describe how life experiences and opportunities differ according to race, class, and gender.

REQUIRED TEXTS

“Sociology: Exploring the Architecture of Everyday Life” by David Newman (10th Edition)

Additional readings are posted on the course website in the “Modules” tab. They are in electronic 'pdf' format.

COURSE POLICIES

The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:

A sincere desire to help you learn. Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn, I have invested a significant amount of time into the design of this course site, with the hopes that the materials and assignments will enhance your learning. I think this course is understandable, interesting, and engaging. However, if at any time you are unclear or unsure about any aspects of the course - including reading material - feel free to contact me for assistance/clarification.

Fairness. Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It is your job to clearly communicate to me (in your writing) that you understand the material. I don't negotiate final grades.

Respect and inclusion. This class is a "Safe Space" for all students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, and transgender students are welcome in this classroom and encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. All are welcome!

The following outlines what I expect of you throughout the quarter:

A sincere effort to learn the course material. When participating in discussions and when writing papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade.

Preparation. You should keep up with the readings each week, particularly before contributing to seminar and our course discussion board.

Promptness. You should comply with all due dates, as **I do not accept late work. All assignments are due by 10am on the listed due date..NO EXCEPTIONS (that includes**

computer problems). You will learn that I am quite a stickler on due dates, so please learn to comply with all deadlines. I highly recommend that you plan to turn in your work early (with plenty of time to spare before the 10am deadline - you can even turn in your work days early!).

I accept assignments ONLY in the following formats: pdf and Word. Do NOT send to me attachments in other formats. Submitting your work to me in other formats will result in a**ZERO** grade.

You can submit your work to me in the following ways:

(1) by uploading your work to Canvas (on the Assignments pages), or

(2) IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY ONLY (such as you cannot access Canvas), you can email your work to me at my Bellevue College address. croix.saffin@bellevuecollege.edu

It is your job to get your work in on time.

Every student should have a “back up plan” for what you will do if you have computer problems. **Please note that you are responsible for getting your work in on time REGARDLESS of the state of your computer/browser or your Internet Service Provider (ISP).** All late work will receive a zero grade. Due dates are indicated on the “Calendar” link at the top of the course website, so it is extremely important for you to stay on top of the Calendar.

Contribution. Learning about each others' experiences and perspectives is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I believe that you will learn a lot about yourself and your fellow classmates. To work effectively in this course, therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. This is why you are required to contribute to class discussions. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.

Respect, courtesy, and tolerance. Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be tolerated.

Honesty. This means no cheating and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate OR from the Newman book. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

GRADING

Final course grades are based on the following point breakdown:

Quizzes (5 @ 20pts each)

100 points

Discussion participation (5 @ 30pts each; 2 @ 25pts each)	200 points
Doing Sociology Assignments (10 @ 10pts each)	100 points
Exams (2 @ 100pts each)	200 points
TOTAL	600 points

EXTRA CREDIT: You will have a couple of 5 point extra credit opportunities this quarter.

When it is time for me to assign a letter grade to your overall course work, I use the following letter-grade equivalents:

A	=	555-600 points
A-	=	537-554 points
B+	=	513-536 points
B	=	495-512 points
B-	=	477-494 points
C+	=	465-476 points
C	=	435-464 points
C-	=	417-434 points
D+	=	405-416 points
D	=	357-404 points
F	=	0-356 points

The following is a description of the course grade components:

(1) **Quizzes:** Over the course of the quarter, you will be given 5 short quizzes on the reading materials. Quizzes will typically be a mix of short answer and multiple choice questions. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you have done the readings and understand them on a basic level. These quizzes will also help you in learning material for your exams and give you a “feel” for how I ask test questions.

I generally post quizzes about a week before they are due; that will allow you to work on them when it is most convenient for you. However, once you begin working on a quiz, there will be a time limit to finish it. Please note that **I do not give make-up quizzes**, so if you miss one, you will receive a zero grade. PLEASE DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO COMPLETE YOUR QUIZZES IN THIS CLASS. Please also review the Calendar link at the top of the site to see due dates. Plan ahead! **(NOTE: Checking the calendar link frequently is one of the keys to success in this class – EVERYTHING that is due is posted for you there!)**

(2) **Discussion Participation:** Each week, you will participate in large class discussions on the "Discussions" link (on the left-hand side of the course website). It is your responsibility, as a member of our class, to respond thoughtfully not only to my prompt(s), but also to your classmates' comments. You are required to participate thoroughly in each week's discussion(s), as your grade will be based on the quality of your contributions and your level of involvement. In order to receive high grades on your discussion, you will need to:

(a) make an initial post about the topic in the first couple of days of the week (because if you wait until the night before the discussion is "due," then your classmates will not benefit from your insights!), and

(b) respond to AT LEAST 2-4 of your classmates' posts throughout the week (i.e. contribute something intellectually meaningful).

In other words, you will need to make a TOTAL of 3-5 high-quality posts each week- one will be your initial post (to my discussion prompt) and then the rest will be your responses to what others have said. I have set up the weekly discussions so that you cannot see what others have posted until you've made your own initial post first.

I recommend that you ***check the discussion board almost daily, including the morning the discussion closes.*** By checking the discussion board frequently, you will be able to look for opportunities where you can add more to the conversation (thus improving your grade!). This will also improve your learning. The following are guidelines that you should follow in order to contribute to successful class discussions:

Your responses to my discussion questions should be in sentence/paragraph format, and you should avoid what I call "text message" grammar (that means no "u" instead of "you"). While format is always important (since it eases communication), the focus in this class is primarily on content. Therefore, your comments should be meaningful and expand your classmates' understanding of the topic. The goal for our discussions is to deepen our understanding of the course themes.

For five of the discussion threads, you can earn up to thirty points for your contributions. There are two weeks that you will have exams, so the discussion threads will be less rigorous, thus you can earn up to twenty-five points those two weeks. Your posts must reflect real thought and deepen the conversation. Therefore keep the following in mind:

- Say something that will *contribute* to a *meaningful* discussion--this requires *time and thought!* Thoroughly reflect on and think about the point you are making.
- Fully explain and elaborate your points, using examples, evidence and logic to explain. Rely on evidence whenever possible, as this course is a social science course, and you are learning the social science perspective. Speak with precision regarding your meaning, rather than being vague or general.
- Respond to the topic, not the author. This does not mean you should ignore the person who wrote the original post, but it means you need to focus on the ideas in the post and how to further the conversation on the topic, not tell the author what you think of his or her post.

- Place your reaction in the context of the discussion. Make sure that you clearly connect your response to the week's (or previous weeks') themes.
- Minimize prejudices, biases, unfounded beliefs, and too much reliance on emotional reactions, which can sidetrack good sound judgment and opinions rooted in your learning and in the sociological perspective. It is easy for bias, belief and emotion to dominate a discussion because we have existing emotions around the topic at hand, or because we fall prey to "reductionism" (seeing individuals as causes of their predicaments, which have social roots and solutions).
- Feel free to be personal and interpersonal on the threads, in addition to substantive discussion. This aspect of discussion helps the group bond as a community. Remember, too, that you will apply many of the topics to your own social worlds. Be careful, however, not to go WAY off on a personal tangent--stay focused on the topic. If you want to carry on a more personal discussion, use the "other" forum on the discussion site. The assignment forums are reserved for analyzing the assignment of the week.

Examples of good discussion posts include: clarifying or expanding the relevant concept if important points are missing, vague or incorrect; looking at the issue from another angle or perspective; adding pertinent information; asking a question that forces your classmates to think more in depth on the topic.

I'm looking forward to an engaging and interesting discussion board!

(3) **Doing Sociology Assignments:** For these ten assignments, students will be asked to conduct their own sociological observations, and complete a short 1 page **typed** write-up of their findings. The purpose of these assignments is for students to apply a sociological lens to everyday encounters. Students might be asked to go to a fast-food restaurant and observe interactions between customers and workers or violate a social norm and reflect on that violation. These assignments are embedded in the Modules and due dates are noted on the calendar.

(4) **Exams** - There will be two exams (essentially a midterm and a final exam - note the final exam is NOT comprehensive). Exams are designed to make sure you understand important course concepts and themes. Exams will include multiple choice and short answer questions. You will have two hours to complete these exams. Due dates are noted on the calendar.

The **Disability Resource Center** serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact the DRC as soon as possible.

If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter.

The DRC office is located in B132 or you can call their reception desk at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach the DRC by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit the DRC website for application information into the program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc

[CLICK THIS LINK BELOW FOR YOUR WEEKLY AGENDA](#)

[SOC 101 Summer 2015 Weekly Schedule.pdf](#)  